2: Villiers T-5 (1938-39) 1948 MK2 Maritime Arabs MK2
Kuwait MT1

Negro origin, the descendants of slaves, though not now slaves themselves. Many others are of Iranian origin. Almost none are Bedouin, for the Arab Bedouin is not a seafaring man. In Kuwait, the callings open to the low-class Iranian are restricted to portering, pearling (either as diver or as tender), and sailing. Both Iranians and Negroes work splendidly, are loyal, competent, and well disciplined.

As the *nakhoda* class is tied to the merchant by a structure of debt, so also are the sailors tied to the *nakhoda* class in the same way. All deep-sea sailing is paid for on a shares system, and there are no wages. Often the *nakhoda* of the deep-sea dhow has an interest in a pearling vessel (though not now to anything like the same extent as in former years), and the sailor may be bound to him through pearling debts, either his own or inherited. The more iniquitous practices in the pearling business structure have long been on the way out, largely because of the excellent example set at Bahrein, but the debt tradition stands and is almost impossible to eradicate.

The sailors go to sea because they know no other life, and they make a wretched living by incredibly difficult methods. They have no possessions other than the clothes they stand in, and one or two spare gowns, a good headcloth, and a few sarongs. Their toothbrush is the twig of a tree; their ablutions are made five times daily at a mosque well, or in the sea; they know no shelter and rarely have a bed. The younger seamen, I have noticed, often have no home other than the *suq*, or native bazaar, where they coil down in their rough cloaks for a night's sleep on a bench in a cheap coffee shop, or in the sand. At sea, they stretch out on the deck, beneath the stars, for there is no such thing as accommodation for the seamen or anyone else in most dhows. The officers and the more important merchants live on a bench round the wheel, in the stern of the ship; the seamen lie down anywhere.

What keeps the seaman a disciplined and more or less contented worker is his hope of reward, principally from smuggling or his own ventures, and his ambition to get hold of a tiny shop in the *suq* of his home town. This is an ambition he rarely achieves. His more usual fate is to die young, especially if he be also a pearl diver.

439 505 they completed their trip down the African coast to Zanzibar too quickly.

Once the trading voyage down the African coast to Zanzibar is completed, Arab and Persian craft usually load a cargo of mangrove poles for shipment back to Arabia, unless they have the rare luck of getting cargo on northern consignment. For centuries mangrove poles from Africa [342 314] have been used in the construction of houses in Arabia, where there is an extreme shortage of wood of any kind. Indian dhows never load mangrove poles since there is an abundance of wood in India. Mangrove trees are plentiful along the East African coast in swamps at certain river mouths; most poles come from the Rufiji Delta, a little south of Zanzibar, and from Lamu, north of Zanzibar. The poles are cut by the dhow crews, with the aid of Swahili cutters recruited for the purpose.

439 314 Alan Villiers[22] spent a month in the Rufiji Delta with a Kuwait crew obtaining a cargo of mangrove poles and has given us a most vivid description of pole-gathering activities. In the Rufiji Delta the mangrove trees grow in the soft, muddy delta, so that the cutters must wade in mud and water all day long. The branches are stripped with small axes and the poles loaded into small dugout canoes and brought to collection points where they are graded and stamped by government inspectors. Frequent and sometimes constant rain and savage mosquitos make a pole-gathering trip in the Rufiji Delta a suffering hell!

The Arabs have to pay the firm holding the pole-concession on the swamp for the poles, but in true Arab fashion they manage to load considerably more poles than they pay for. There is a well-organized pole-stealing racket, with everyone in on it, from the cutters to checkers and inspectors, with the exception of the head government forestry inspector. As the prevailing market price for mangrove poles in Arabia is about the same as the list price in Africa, the Arabs could not make any profit if they did not manage to load some extra poles.

439 In addition to mangrove poles, the Arabs may load cocoanuts, cloves, cocoanut oil, soap, or vermicelli. A private venture of the crew for the return trip from Zanzibar may be in lemons. Around Zanzibar lemons can be bought by the canoe-load for several rupees. The crew can squeeze the lemons and bottle the juice in bottles they have acquired along the way, using a pinch of salt as a preservative. The juice is sold at a nice profit in northern ports, where it is diluted for making sherbet.

In making the trip home on the southwest monsoon the Arabs waste little time, for the sooner they can get back, the more time they have for other activities before it is time to ship out again. Dhows from Oman

[22] A. Villiers, 55, pp. 237-261.

5: Harrison D-4 (1912-1924) 1924 M1 Middle East
Maritime Arabs MK2

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342

A PEARL DIVER AND HIS HOUSE

facing page 84